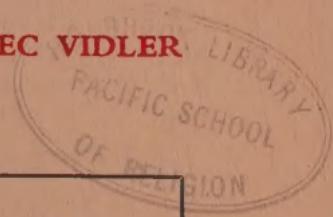


# THE FRONTIER

A CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON THE COMMON LIFE

EDITED BY

PHILIP MAIRET AND ALEC VIDLER



AUGUST 1951  
Vol. II No. 8

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# THE FRONTIER

## A CHRISTIAN COMMENTARY ON THE COMMON LIFE

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Vol. II. No. 8.

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### Monthly Letter

**I**F, as seem tolerably certain, a majority of the human race has always lived in conditions of under-nourishment periodically intensified by mortal famine, the more fortunate peoples have usually been able to live in blissful ignorance of the fact. Only in recent times have instantaneous communications and world publicity kept all of us continually aware that so many live on the brink of starvation. Several international organizations, one of world scope, are now officially deputed to study world-want as a problem, to produce plans for its solution, or in the interim, to convey relief—usually most inadequate—to especially impoverished areas. Unofficial movements also spring up, demanding succour for the destitute peoples by international action, calling for a plan that would mobilize all the resources of science and civilization to this primary purpose, and appealing with confidence for the support of all lovers of their fellow-men. Sometimes they add that if we will only distribute plenty, peace will be added unto us. Since Christians sometimes help to frame such proposals, and must feel the full force of exhortations to “see that such as are in need and necessity have right”, we propose here to consider the prospects of planned remedial action of this kind. The direct method of organized private charity which is traditional in the Churches, is here confronted with “need

and necessity" of dimensions that appear quite beyond its scope.

### *Public and Private Charity*

Private charity has indeed risen to the situation by making some valiant efforts. While the Senate and Representatives of the United States were discussing the loan they finally passed for the relief of the famine in India (nearly 70 million pounds' worth of wheat) there was a public dinner in an Illinois city where 100 guests sat down to consume a glass of water apiece, for which they paid the price of a full meal. This was the first of a whole series of dinner parties given by families, university associations and other bodies throughout the State ; all the moneys thus collected were devoted to a "Share-a-meal-with-India" Fund. The large shipload of wheat which this has financed, the additional amounts purchased with the proceeds of Church appeals and collections, and a number of token gifts of food sent via the Indian Embassy—all these may amount to little beside the stream of laden vessels which has been set going by the Government's loan, and even that will only partly supply India's enormous needs. Yet the private efforts have a moral value out of all proportion to their size. They are also economically sounder than loans (or even gifts) on Government account, insofar as the private donor denies himself something in order to give—which is by no means the case when State generosity is financed by taxation or, not uncommonly, by inflation. The provision by richer governments of assistance to poorer nations is one of the most encouraging developments of the age : it has certainly prevented many an imminent human disaster and no one should belittle the humanitarian impulses that have made it possible. Even outright gifts made by governments rarely escape invidious aspersions, because they cannot, in the present state of the world, be completely uncompromised by political calculations. For instance, sheer compassion and generosity played their part in carrying through the American loan for

Indian relief, especially in the repudiation of certain objectionable conditions of repayment that some legislators wanted to impose. But the Communist Government of China had already started sending India wheat that was bitterly needed by its own people. Who could feel sure that Congress was not spurred to such swift action as it was, and upon so large a scale, by political rivalry? Christians at any rate are well aware that philanthropy, especially political philanthropy, is always compounded with some measure of self interest. Spontaneous charity is psychologically, as well as economically, sounder than government intervention.

### *The Capital Question*

But obviously private charity cannot meet the whole tremendous case. Even governmental charity can only palliate evils or tide over emergencies; the ultimate aim must be to raise the indigent peoples to a position in which they can help themselves. Those who demand a world plan with this aim are not always sufficiently aware of the vast amount of research and planning that has already been devoted to the problem, mainly by the expert bodies appointed under U.N.O.,<sup>1</sup> of which the World Food and Agriculture Organization is only one. Years have been spent in devising co-ordinated policies for U.N.O.'s member nations and recommending their governments to adopt them; and if this approach has led to no very impressive success, the difficulties it has revealed have furnished knowledge that is indispensable to the framing of any more ambitious plans. It has clearly shown that the major obstacle to the economic development of the poor countries is not unwillingness on the part of the richer nations to

<sup>1</sup> For the most recent example (May 1951) see *Measures for the Economic Development of Under-developed Countries*: Report of a group of experts appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Obtainable from H.M. Stationery Office: 5s. net.

supply assistance but their own inability to receive it. We Western peoples can teach others only what we know, give them only what we have. The only higher standard of living we can educate them up to is one pretty much like our own, and that means—in two words—capitalism and industrialism. By "capitalism" we mean the production of the consumable goods of life by immense and costly round-about methods—factories, building, power-stations, transport, etc.—so that capitalism and industrialism are two aspects of the same thing. The simpler peoples live by directer methods requiring little capital equipment, "highly-developed" economic systems like those of America and Western Europe are distinguished by their great capital equipment; and viewed in this light, the problem of enriching the poorer countries reduces itself to that of equipping them with capital which they have not the means or the knowledge to produce for themselves.

### *The Lesson of Persia*

A very great deal of capital has been invested in the under-developed lands to their substantial benefit by Europeans, and to a lesser extent by Americans. But the most needy of these countries, which are proud and independent political States in Asia, the Middle East and Africa, have none of the conditions or legal traditions which have facilitated the rise of capitalism in the Christian West. They do not understand the social process of saving for capital formation, nor the respect for property and the protection of industrial enterprise which capitalist enterprise presupposes. Their own saving is traditionally limited to the hoarding of jewellery or precious metals, and if in modern times they do invest savings, they put them into enterprises under Western governments, not under their own. What has lately happened to British oil interests in Persia is but a very large-scale example of one kind of risk that attends all capital enterprise under oriental governments—a risk that has lately increased and is increasing. The popu-

lations of such States have imbibed those political intoxicants of the West, nationalism and democracy, faster than they are learning its technics or its jurisprudence ; and they are now less than ever in a mood to tolerate the presence in their midst of foreign capital enterprises employing their nationals and developing their resources. Could the most generous organization for world-betterment, under U.N.O. or any other authority, overcome this immense natural obstacle ? The peoples concerned are heirs of several venerable civilizations, mostly older than ours ; of which they are understandably proud. Our scientific civilization of technics grew out of two thousand years of a very different spiritual and social culture. If the extension of the material utilities and benefits of this culture over the whole globe is what we mean by " raising world-standards of living ", should we not first consider whether the same fruit can be gathered from trees of such widely different kinds ?

### *Compulsory Capitalization ?*

Every people is indeed more or less anxious to acquire these benefits. Their politicians in particular are in a hurry to industrialize, and expect to solve the problem of providing capital by some means which will make themselves its owners. From this point of view Communism is the attempt to graft what cannot be grown ; to impose by centralized power a social economy which elsewhere arose spontaneously when conditions had ripened to make it possible. The popularization of Marxism as " anti-capitalism " has rather obscured the fact that Communist Governments are above all the most idolatrous devotees of capitalization : their objection is only to the voluntary and private provision of capital, which they prefer to raise by enforcing further abstinence upon populations already living at very low levels of income. We have seen them sell their people's grain at a bargain price in time of famine, in order to buy machinery for capitalization, and, criminal as such procedure seems to be—and is—the main motive is their belief that a

powerful industrial system is an end so good as to justify any means ; for that future value they are as willing to sacrifice present lives as are other Governments to shed blood for military victory. If industrial progress were as certain to produce human welfare as is commonly supposed—by some others besides Communists—it might indeed appear desirable, on a very long view, that the under-developed peoples should pass through two or three generations of communist tyranny and be thereby made to adapt their ideas, manners and customs to the industrial way of life, which they are unable to take to spontaneously. But it is in fact very doubtful whether Communism has actually speeded up the process of industrialization in Russia or will do so in Asia. Such a régime also introduces retarding factors. There is no assurance, upon the evidence available, that Communism as we know it will be able to lead the “undeveloped” half of mankind through an industrial revolution, without horrors much worse than those which Europe had to endure a few generations ago ; Communist leadership threatens wholesale destruction of human values that are more vital than technics. Also—a point with which we are here more closely concerned—it is most doubtful whether populations possessed by Communism really get any more to eat.

### *The Production of Food*

From a humanitarian, and indeed every practical point of view, the top priority for raising the standard of living of poor nations is the increase and improvement of food production. Many of these countries have made no advance in agricultural technique for many centuries, and in some there has been great retrogression. In the ancient riverine states of the Middle East, for example, agriculture was once magnificently capitalized : there were excellent systems of irrigation of which only traces are discernible in what are now vast areas of barren desert. In other regions, notably China, the old methods are still in use and are remarkably

sound, a basis which a more scientific husbandry will have to respect and build upon if it is not to do more harm than good. The extension of Western technology to the older continents presents far greater difficulties in the sphere of agriculture than in manufacture: for one thing, Western technics are by nature more effective for making things than for growing food; and, so far as our science has been applied to agriculture, the methods it has produced have been related to the soils, climates and conditions of the West. This is a sphere in which even good experts are feeling their way, and are still capable of big mistakes. They have special knowledge of indubitable value when all the local conditions are understood and reckoned with, but in other continents they have also a lot to learn before they can teach, and the best of them know it. The contribution that Western agricultural science could ultimately make toward feeding the multitudes elsewhere depends upon many other advances, cultural, social and political. In the words of the Report footnoted upon a previous page:

“The absorption of new technology in these countries is a particularly difficult and costly process. Even in the case of relatively simple agricultural improvements, there is need for a well developed administration in government departments of agriculture, well staffed with experts and technicians and having an extension service that can reach and teach the farmers. In general it is also necessary to have a basic minimum level of education and literacy among the actual producers in order to achieve widespread advances in technology. It is a whole process of education which has to be developed at all levels. It is necessary to build up the educational institutions without which this whole process cannot be developed and maintained at the proper level of effectiveness. The first major obstacle to the general advance in technology in under-developed countries is therefore the lack of an educational and administrative structure through which the producers can learn the new technology.”

### *A Fate-appointed Task*

If all this is true—if the under-developed peoples cannot be cured of their destitution without such a comprehensive

adjustment of their whole cultural and social life, with all the stresses that will impose—would it not be better to pull out, and leave them to learn from us in their own way, as little and as gradually as they please? Such a question is really defeatist and quite unrealistic. The Western world has already started these countries upon the road to technological civilization, with many painful and destructive effects upon their manners and customs; they neither know how to turn back to their old life nor have they the means to go forward unaided. The Western traders exacted large profits on their services, especially at first, but both parties are now heavily interdependent. The value of the exports of these indigent countries amounts on an average to a fifth of their total income—value received by the West chiefly in the form of industrial materials, oil, rubber and scarce metals, the loss of which would be almost crippling; nor could the producing countries do without what they receive in exchange. Their governments, too, are kept in their usually precarious power by the revenues that the traffic provides. It is impossible, then, simply to say we are not responsible, that we did nothing to cause their poverty but even something to mitigate it. We are co-responsible with their own governments, for enabling them to proceed upon the path into which we have led them—that is, if they want progress of that kind, and it is evident that, on the whole, they do. They cannot possibly proceed without costly help from the West. And if we fail to meet that responsibility, they will pass one by one into the limbo of communism.

### *The Resources of the West*

Such a responsibility can only be discharged by a liberality beyond all commercial tradition. It means casting much bread upon the waters that will never return, and if it does will not be the same kind of bread. Some idea of the size of the effort demanded is given by the U.N.O. Committee's reckoning of the amount of capital that would have to be provided annually for years to come to make a good job

of the under-developed world ; it seems about equal to the total national income of the United Kingdom. Even so the estimated effect may not strike the layman as anything to write home about : it should raise individual incomes by about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent, but would actually do so by only  $1\frac{1}{2}$ , allowing for the growth of population which is excessive in most of the areas concerned. Nevertheless the benefits would be such, in the experts' opinion, that a good deal less would be well worth while, and actually nothing like so much will be possible for some time ahead. To find finance just as fast as it could be usefully applied will not be the real difficulty, especially if the reluctant re-armament of the West should achieve its purpose and relieve the international tension, for then immense resources of energy would be released. The recovery of Europe has already relieved the U.S.A. of the expense of Marshall Aid ; the European economic systems are almost fully restored and will soon be in danger of over-production ; and as for the United Kingdom, for several years before 1914 it was exporting capital at the rate of 7 per cent of its whole national income, and is now more powerfully equipped for production than ever before. Financially, the equipment of the under-developed nations is not a frightening liability ; it is more likely to be the only hope of employing the super-abundant productive energies of the West.

### *Destiny and Charity*

The highly developed nations are not only capable of bearing their part in this project ; by their inbred character they are destined to it. That is why it was proclaimed by President Truman a year and a half ago in that "Point Four", which as yet has made little progress towards realization. It is bootless to ask now whether it is a good thing for scientific civilization to be extended to all mankind—a question that very few in the West ever seriously asked before the arrival of the atom bomb. The effects of power-production on human societies can be as destructive

as beneficial. Our scientific consciousness is a change in the condition of man, like his mastery of fire or his invention of agriculture, bringing about no less irresistibly an endless series of problems which cannot be evaded. It came about as a by-product of Christianity itself, raising the human mind, worthy or unworthy, to a higher potency in its operations upon nature, and whether it will be to our good or evil depends upon what we do with it. This is not simply a question of whether we are willing to find means to help to "develop" other peoples if they desire development. It means shielding them from too rapid and ruthless progress in some directions; and rightly to lead them in others will require of us much more than money can buy or governments command. It will require the spirit in which, for instance, many missionaries have taught the Gospel to those same peoples; in which many civil servants and teachers have laboured for their political and educational progress.

We began by speaking of charity as intrinsically superior to any good works than governments can organize and impose; but there is no necessary opposition between the two. Unless such charity works within the frame of internationally organized assistance, no world-planning will in the end enable the indigent nations to better their lot in the modern world. And just as needful is the continuance of privately organized charities, for which new needs will always arise. The existence of free and spontaneous charity is also indispensable if public services are to be conducted with wisdom and in contact with the realities of human need.

## INTERIM

## Israel and the Displaced Arabs

The purpose of the Conference held at Beirut early in May was to study the condition and prospects of the Arab Refugees from Palestine, and to consider what the Churches have been doing and might next do to help them. The brief statement that has so far been circulated, and has had too little publicity, is a harrowing account of human misery and a stern challenge to action. The delegates convened by the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches lived with Arab families in Beirut, toured the refugee camps and settlements, and found a situation even worse than they expected. There are nearly three-quarters of a million of these deeply injured people, a complete cross-section of society from peasants to land-owners and professors. The world to-day contains a number of appalling refugee problems, but none more pathetic, nor perhaps quite so politically dangerous in the resentments perpetuated by its existence.

\* \* \* \*

The question of responsibility had to be discussed, not as a matter of historic interest and still less of recrimination, but in so far as it can be a guide to beneficial action. That the Western nations were in fact responsible for the situation out of which the problem arose, and in part for a solution which only relieved one refugee problem by creating another—this is practically acknowledged by the fact that U.N.O. and a few Western voluntary agencies are doing very nearly all that is being done to keep the Arab refugees alive, though in a state of physical and mental desperation. But any tolerable settlement would require not only the provision of a far vaster fund of money, but political agreements and decisions much harder to bring about. One cannot help feeling that these wise and conscientious observers were almost completely baffled. They concluded that the idea that more than a very few of the refugees can be repatriated will have to be abandoned (though that is the hope to which nearly all the Arabs still passionately cling) and they see no hope of any humane solution without the establishment of a genuine peace between Jewry and the Arab States, which can only come by a new Western initiative exercised through the United Nations.

\* \* \* \*

If, however, the refugee problem can only be solved by a real settlement of outstanding differences between Israel and its neighbour States, the converse is no less true. The refugees constitute the worst possible emotional obstacle to more peaceful relations. A point which seems to be avoided in most discussions of this issue is that in the nature of the case, a special contribution is expected from the beneficiaries of the expulsion. Everyone knows that the economic plight of the new State of Israel is such that its financial contribution could not be great ; the greater therefore must be its moral contribution. Since this Conference the United Nations Agency for dealing with these Arabs has been able to announce a 3 to 5 year plan of re-settlement and economic development. Contributions from the British and French Governments, as well as an immense appropriation that Mr. Truman has asked Congress to provide, are expected to make 75 million dollars available for this work in the year now beginning. That is a considerable ray of hope ; but one must be wary of thinking that money can do everything.

We need more detailed reports of the findings of this Conference. What has been divulged confirms the importance of the work being done by Christians in this stricken field, its great remedial—and potentially solvent—fluence. It confirms also the increased need for the churches of all countries to co-operate more closely with those of the Near East ; and the universal duty of charitably supporting every effort towards a just and merciful solution.

### Reading for Refugees

The provision of reading matter for the Refugee Camps in Germany and Austria is still an important department of post-war relief, and it owes much to an unofficial organization which sprang from the initiative of a *Frontier* reader. This admirable agency distributes parcels of periodicals that have already been perused and would otherwise be sent to salvage. The costs to supporters are therefore minimal ; and so are those of administration and overheads, for the originator of this beneficent enterprise is a schoolmaster, and its packing centre is staffed mainly by his sixth-form pupils. The number of contributors must be large, for parcels are sent to about 120 camps as well as to other distributive organizations.

\*     \*     \*     \*

Obviously there is an upper limit to the quantity that such a group can handle. A more serious limitation, however, is imposed by

postage expenses, which are defrayed partly by grants from the Refugee Department of the British Council of Churches. A circular letter from the group has reached us suggesting that well-wishers should make a small annual subscription for postage, or occasional gifts of stamps—benefactors being warned that no acknowledgment will be possible for the latter unless stamped addressed postcard is enclosed.

The closing down of the International Refugee Organization which is expected this year may make this service harder to render but little less necessary ; and the eventuality is being met with foresight. The address is Periodicals for Refugees, 5 Southampton Place, London, W.C. 1.

### **Ave atque Vale !**

Congratulations to Miss Isabel Rattray, who has been Secretary of the Christian Frontier Council since 1949, and who was married on July 7th to Mr. Gerald A. Becket. Dr. Vidler officiated at the wedding, which was solemnized in High Wycombe parish church. It was Miss Rattray who carried through the transfer of the Frontier Council's office from London to Windsor and who has been responsible for organizing the Frontier Luncheons. She was previously on the staff of the *Christian News-Letter*, and several of her colleagues of that period were present at the wedding. Mrs. Becket is succeeded as Secretary of the Frontier Council by Miss Pamela Guest, who was until recently on the staff of the World Council of Churches at Geneva.

## THE YORK MYSTERY CYCLE

ONE of the most interesting revivals that the Festival of Britain has inspired is the production of plays from the medieval town cycles of York, Coventry and Chester. The wonder is not that these masterpieces have been disinterred after all these centuries but rather that they have been allowed to sleep in their graves so long and look so fresh and fair on their re-appearance ; also that works steeped in medieval catholicism have made such an impression on secular audiences in this post-Christian age. I cannot speak for Coventry or Chester, but in York the huge audiences were gripped beyond all expectation. (Yet Mr. Rowntree's recent social survey suggests that the percentage of church-goers in York to-day is thirteen !) Why then did the old plays have this powerful effect ? Partly it was due to civic pride, no doubt ; partly to the spectacular appeal of the production ; but I believe it was chiefly because the basic facts of the Christian religion were being presented with a force and simplicity which only an age of faith can command, and the experience dealt a modern audience a shrewd blow on the heart.

The revival of religious drama is no new thing ; it has been on the way since before Canterbury commissioned Masefield, and T. S. Eliot, and Dorothy Sayers to write plays for performance in the Cathedral : and Martin Browne (the producer of the York plays) has been one of its main sponsors. But producers have usually fought shy of most medieval plays except the Morality *Everyman*. It is a sign of the times that at Edinburgh Festival the most popular play has been a 16th-century Morality, David Lindsay's *Satire of the Three Estates*, which is to be repeated this year for the third time. And now these Mystery Cycles, that go back a good century beyond Lindsay's play, are coming into their own. And no wonder. Like the Moralities they shew Man's place in the Christian scheme of things, but unlike the Morali-

ties they deal not in abstractions but in human passions ; you see in them the perfect picture of insane tyranny, in Herod ; of remorse, in Judas ; of boyish fear, in the young Isaac ; of callous unimaginative cruelty, in the soldiers of the Crucifixion ; of bad-tempered shrewishness and pig-headed conservatism in Noah's wife refusing to set foot on her husband's new-fangled ship. They are all there, clearly portrayed, at once medieval and universal figures. And yet, except for an odd performance or two, they have not seen the light for nearly four hundred years.

### *The Medieval Mystery Plays*

The York plays were last acted, as a cycle, in 1572. Before that in most big towns Mystery plays had been acted yearly on Corpus Christi Day since the mid-fourteenth century, being performed, as the manner then was, in the open air on the "pageants" or two-decker carts provided by the craft gilds. Those were the days when the theatre came to the people, not the people to the theatre. At different stations in the town folk began to gather from four-thirty in the morning, and they watched cart after cart draw up, act its play, and roll on to the next station. Not the whole cycle would be performed each year, but a good selection from it, always including essentials like the Nativity and the Passion, so the populace had no excuse for not knowing the main Bible stories and the articles of their Catholic faith. But if this was instruction it was also pleasure ; the Corpus Christi plays were the great theatrical event of the year, and the antics of the devils and the ranting of Herod provided as much mirth as the Passion did sorrow.

The lists of properties for the plays are enlightening ; you read such items as "God's coat of white leather, six skins", and "Cheveril peruke for God". In days when everyone believed in God no squeamish puritan thought it irreverent to portray Him on the stage. The allotting of subjects to the respective gilds is an interesting study too. Each gild chose a story suited to its craft. It is easy to see why the gold-beaters

should want to act the Adoration of the Kings, with the procession of rich gifts, or the Water-leaders of the Dee the story of Noah's ark (which they seem to have run up—of pre-fabricated parts—in a few minutes on their stage). It is natural, too, that it should be the confectioners who undertook the Last Supper, and the Vintners the Marriage at Cana. But why did the Tanners choose God creating the Heavens, or the Plasterers God making the Earth? What, in the name of both Heaven and Earth, were those astonishing gildsmen doing on those carts of theirs? I suppose we shall never know, but even to look at their records carries you back to an age when the spiritual and the material went hand in hand; when God and Heaven and Hell were as familiar as bread and cheese and ale; when all men had a knowledge of their place in the universe and were well versed in the story of the Fall and the Redemption. In between those days and ours stretch the Reformation, the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, and now this Atomic Age. And yet the audience in York, carried back into the heart of medieval catholicism, found themselves profoundly moved.

### *The York Cycle. The Setting*

Of the York Cycle forty-eight out of the original fifty-seven plays remain, and we saw the greater part of twenty-nine of these performed. The producer skilfully reduced this mass of material to fit into a performance lasting a little over three hours, yet he was careful to preserve the shape and the proportions of the whole. He made no attempt to revive the "pageants"—the itinerant carts. There would have been some antiquarian interest in such a shew but only at a sacrifice of better things. Instead he combined the English with the Continental medieval fashion, as seen in the famous picture of the Valenciennes multiple fixed stage, which shews a wide unlocalized stage in front and along the back several "mansions" or booths representing Hell, Heaven, the Stable of the Nativity, the houses of Caiaphas, Pilate and the like. Though I knew the Valenciennes picture

well I was quite unprepared for the excitement that seized me as I saw the York setting. Martin Browne chose for his theatre the Museum Gardens, and set the audience on raised seats facing the "stage". This was the high grey wall of the ruined Abbey of St. Mary's, with its clerestory windows arching high in the air, and a great sweep of greensward stretching away at its feet. Clearly the one represented Heaven and the other Earth ("middle earth", the home of Man after the Fall). A long curving staircase led from one to the other, and in an angle of two walls stood a little hill with a tree bearing apples ; the Garden of Eden. In the wall below was a dark doorway ; the Sepulchre ; and all along the lawn stood the "mansions", the Stable, the houses of Pilate and Caiaphas, and at the farthest remove from the steps to Heaven a yawning gate, framed in dragons' jaws ; the mouth of Hell. This was a worthy setting for the greatest drama of all time. For that is what the York Cycle is ; it is not a mere Passion Play, like that at Oberammergau, but something "on a far grander and more noble scheme. Its purpose is to review Man's place in the world, his Creation and his Fall, his Redemption and his Final State '*sub specie aeternitatis*'."<sup>1</sup> Its first scene shews God throned in splendour and Lucifer preening himself in his pride, and its last, after the long agony of the Passion, shews us the Day of Judgment, with the division of mankind into the doomed and the saved. This magnificent conception with its all-inclusive story is characteristic of the Middle Ages. The most exhaustive *modern* biography only follows its hero from cradle to grave ; but your medieval chronicler would think that incomplete ; he extends his account at both ends. His story of Man starts long before his birth and ends not with his death but at the Day of Doom. And so Time is seen as a strip of Eternity. The wide and noble setting in York helped the actors to bring home this conception to us. It

<sup>1</sup> Introductory note by Dr. Purvis who edited the text used at the Festival.

was particularly welcome in the celestial and infernal scenes such as those at the opening and closing of the Cycle : in the one we saw Michael, clad in armour, thrusting Lucifer and his minions down from the ramparts of Heaven ; and in the other, "The Last Judgment", God the Father and God the Son, sitting aloft with their angelic hosts, while down on earth the souls of the blessed looked up in worship, and the doomed spirits huddled together in fear, then surged forward with great cries towards Heaven's steps but were cornered and driven back by fiends and finally driven through Hell's gates. It would be a brave producer who would risk these mighty scenes on the cramped picture stage of the modern theatre.

There were impressive scenes on earth, too, where the presence of the great crowd drove home to us the varied reactions of men to Christ and His ministry ; we saw them surge round Him as He healed the sick (powerfully moved, some by hatred, others by love), we watched them shrink from the macabre figure of Lazarus whom He had raised from the tomb ; we heard their wild shouts of acclamation as they welcomed Him with palms to Jerusalem, and their far wilder shouts of bestial cruelty as they bade Pilate crucify Him. Here was Mankind, the good and the evil, playing his part on the great stage of the world beneath the all-seeing eyes of God. This multiple stage put human life into proper perspective ; it was all seen as Dr. Purvis says "*sub specie aeternitatis*". When Satan tempted Eve, there aloft sat God and his angels, watching unseen ; in the great scene of the Harrowing of Hell when Christ called across a wide space to Satan and his crew to open Hell's gates and "let my people pass", we saw at one and the same time the fiends leaping to seize Christ on the lower stage, and behind them the souls of Adam and the patriarchs—weary with 4,600 years in Hell—and up above God despatching Michael from Heaven to do battle with the Enemy of Man.

*York and Oberammergau*

It is inevitable that we should compare the setting of this play with that of Oberammergau ; the two have much in common : the wide stage, mostly in the open air, the "mansions" and the crowd scenes. But the comparison seemed to me all in favour of York ; we had here nothing comparable to the scenes acted at Oberammergau on the inner curtained stage, whose Victorian lighting and artificial cardboard sets took from the grandeur of the great scenes which were played there. (This is partly a matter of contemporary standards of taste. We are now leaving behind, slowly, the worst features of nineteenth-century realism).

*Medievalism*

One of the attractions of the York play for its audience lay in its strongly medieval flavour. Here was the familiar Christian theme seen through the eyes not of the nineteenth century (which acted as a distorting mirror to many people now fifty or over), nor of the twentieth century, but of the Middle Ages. There was a healthy contempt for historical accuracy all through ; anachronisms were plentiful. Pilate was presented as a "knight", Annas and Caiaphas were thought of as bishops ("my Prelates", Pilate calls them) ; under the guise of brutal soldiers busy with a regulation crucifixion we could clearly see the lineaments of medieval craftsmen proud of their tools—the strongly-made cross, the long nails, the stout ropes—and of their skill in wielding them. (It was the gild of Pinners that performed the first part of the Crucifixion, and the gild of Butchers that finished it.) The mixture of awe and ribaldry, too, was typical of the Middle Ages ; in those days it was possible to believe devoutly in the Fiend, the Enemy of Man ("fiend" merely means "enemy") and his power to damn the soul, yet at the same time to present him often as a comic character.

The clear, forceful catholic teaching is medieval too ; in an age of few heretics and fewer unbelievers the job of

the author was not to argue or plead with his audience, but strongly to present the common creed and press it home by the power of terror, pity, remorse and any other emotions he could lay hold of. Occasionally as we listened we were aware that a character was talking *at* us, driving a point home for our edification. The unknown authors evidently had no fear of spoiling the aesthetic effect by the introduction of passages of bald teaching.

### *The Language*

One of the most delightful medieval features was the language throughout. Many hearers were amazed at its beauty. It has a strong power to move, in spite of—or perhaps because of—its radical simplicity. It is everywhere direct and forceful, never ambiguous or sophisticated. It is clear that it was written to be spoken, not to be read with the eye ; that is to say that it is oral and popular rather than literary. Yet it has fine literary qualities with its lyrical verse form and its forceful Old English alliteration added to the later English thyme. At times it is crude and noisy, providing grand lines for the “roaring boys”, the “ham” actors. This is how Caiaphas’ Porter (it was a Porteress in the York production—a prototype of Dame Quickly) addresses Judas when he insists on seeing Pilate and Caiaphas, who are drinking wine within :

“ Hence, glowering gadling ! God give thee ill grace !  
Say, beetle-browed briber, why blowest thou such a boast ?  
Thou are cumbered in curstness and cares to the most.”

The speeches of the Devils, written in the liveliest style, are pure rhodomontade.

#### *First Devil*

“ Why roar’st thou, ribald, with thy rude voice ? ”

#### *Second Devil*

“ What, hear’st thou not this ugly noise ?  
These luridans that in Limbo dwell  
Muster great mirthe here to tell.”

*Satan (after his defeat)*

“ Out, out ! Behold, our bailey is broken,  
 And burst are all our bands of brass.  
 Alas ! for dole full sore.  
 I sink into Hell pit ! ”

The speeches of the Shepherds at the Nativity are lifted above the commonplace by a breath of poetry. (A wave of pleasure passed over the whole audience as these lines were spoken in good broad Yorkshire.)

*First Shepherd*

“ Since I am but a simple knave  
 Although I come of courteous kin,  
 Lo, here, such harness as I have,  
 A barren brooch with a bell of tin.”

*Second Shepherd*

“ Two cob nuts here upon a band,  
 Lo, little babe, what I have brought.”

*Third Shepherd*

“ Ye are a prince without a peer,  
 I have no present that you may please.  
 Lo, a horn spoon that I have here,  
 And it will hold good forty peas.”

The following extract from the scene of the Nativity shews that blend of simplicity and sublimity which is a quality we can no longer command. At one moment the Virgin addresses the child as the king of high heaven ; the next, as the babe whom she must nurse. There is not a touch of “ piety ” or sentimentality in this lovely episode, and never any awkwardness in the transition from the homely to the devout.

*Mary*

“ Now in my soul great joy have I ;  
 I am all clad in comfort clear.

(*The child is born. She kneels to him.*)

Jesu my son that is so dear  
 Now born is he !  
 Hail, my Lord God ! Hail, Prince of Peace !  
 Hail, my Father, and hail, my Son !  
 (She lifts him in her arms.)

Vouchsafe, Sweet Son, I pray to thee  
 I may take thee in these arms of mine,  
 And in this poor weed array thee.  
 Grant me thy bliss,  
 As I am thy mother chosen to be  
 In truthfulness.

*Joseph (entering. He spies the bundle on Mary's knee.)*  
 O Mary ! What's that sweet thing on thy knee ?

*Mary*

“ It is my son, the sooth to say,

*Joseph*

Now welcome, flower of fairest hue !  
 I'll worship thee with main and might.  
 Hail, royal King, root of all right !  
 Hail, Saviour ! ”

### *Amateur Actors*

This great cycle of plays, originally performed by forty-odd gilds, has a multiplicity of small parts that a professional company would find it difficult to cope with. But then, it was not written for professionals ; that is one of the interesting things about it. It is essentially amateur drama. And it was played largely by amateurs last month in York (though the parts of Christ, Lucifer and a few others were well carried by professionals, the Christ presenting a welcome picture of young strength and the Lucifer of subtlety). Not all these actors were impressive : the Disciples, for instance, lacked distinction. But there were many small parts excellently played : Caiaphas' shrill Porteress, who stood hand on hip and sent Judas packing ; the unctuous Pharisees and

learned Doctors amazed to find themselves ranked with the goats and not the sheep on Judgment Day ; the rough soldiery, with their matter-of-fact brutality ; the delightful Yorkshire shepherds, full of innocent gaiety ; little Zacchaeus, (and his wife who shewed such irritation when he proposed to give his goods to the poor) : Adam and Eve, with a touching native grace and dignity ; the risen Lazarus, with his spectral appearance.

The sight of so many amateurs giving such a good account of themselves must have raised in many a mind in the audience the question : “ Will this play do for our village ? ” That is not easy to answer, but some points are plain enough.

First, something on the scale of the whole Cycle might be put through by amateur actors, but they would need a professional producer of unusual calibre, a man not only sympathetic to the theme, but one who is used, as Martin Browne is, to dealing with poetic and religious drama. Without such a director a venture in that scale might be disastrous. For one thing, it is not easy to control the movements of great crowds and give them significant shape. This was most skilfully contrived in the York production. But there is no reason why amateurs who feel unequal to the Cycle should not attempt a single play or a group of plays. I have seen amateurs act the Chester Play of the Deluge, the Broome play of Abraham and Isaac, both the Coventry Nativities, and the Chester Shepherds’ Play, and have twice seen young amateurs make a good shot at the Wakefield Second Shepherds’ Play (the famous *Secunda Pastorum*, a ribald piece of work that needs careful editing). The second group consisted of children from a Yorkshire village not far from Wakefield ; whose vigour and total lack of sophistication produced the authentic medieval flavour. But the producer of a Mystery play needs a penetrating eye that sees more than is set down in the mere text. In any play the text is in a sense simply a libretto, but the medieval texts present more difficulties than the modern,

being almost wholly without stage directions, and a reader who has never seen such plays acted and is without a strong dramatic sense may vote them dreary stuff. (Even the actors at the Old Vic, at their first reading of the Chester Shepherds' Play, had, I am told, no idea what lively drama it would prove to be).

It is not easy to get hold of complete texts of the Cycles that survive, but the edition in the Everyman Library of *Everyman and Other Interludes*, so long out of print, is once again available. It contains a few of the best plays in the Chester, Wakefield and Coventry Cycles, together with a Cornish play or two, and some valuable appendices. For some reason it contains none of the York plays, but the S.P.C.K. is now selling Dr. Purvis's short version of the York Cycle, which is the text used for the York Festival performance.

My own feeling about the acting of Mystery plays by amateurs is conveyed in Martin Browne's own comment at the end of his York programme notes :

“ Written for amateurs to act, these plays are not sophisticated and do not demand subtle acting. Sometimes they are formal, at others extremely realistic, but always they ask for a fine sense of rhythm in the speaking, strength in movement, and above all a direct and simple sincerity born of faith.”

LEILA DAVIES.

## THE APPRECIATION OF ART

“ART”, said Dr. Emil Brünner in his Gifford Lectures on *Christianity and Civilization*, “is more mysterious than beauty.”

True as that is about art as a human faculty, if a work of art is perplexing we all feel that there is something wrong—either in the work, the artist or ourselves. For is not the highest mission of art to reveal or clarify beauty? If it mystifies, there are recriminations between the artist and his actual or potential patrons, each trying to fix the blame upon the other. Such altercations have always been liable to arise, and it is an interesting question why they are sometimes conducted with so much asperity.

In one sense at least, aesthetic arguments resemble religious dissensions. The actual effect of a work of art, like that of a statement about God or the soul, depends upon something in the mind that receives it, a factor that no one can prove to exist. In the one case it is a state of the will, in the other of the sensibility; actualities that lie beyond discussion, between the soul and its God. There may be hypocrisy; a person who really sees nothing in a difficult picture by one of the latest painters may behave as though he admired it, and the pretence may be only snobbery or a fear of appearing out of the fashion. But not uncommonly, it is an attempt to achieve a spiritual condition by going through some of the motions supposed proper to it, like the King in Hamlet trying to pray. Much art-hypocrisy is a testimony to the belief in art; indeed, most people are at least dimly persuaded that there is a mysterious essence, called beauty, that can only be experienced, like the grace of God, through a state of one's being. That, of course, is how the Platonists and neo-Platonists thought of beauty; but is not a similar feeling about it present in many who are innocent of any aesthetic philosophy? Why else should they be more or less ashamed of not understanding what is

reputedly beautiful? To be convicted of blindness to beauty before a thing which ought to evoke it, or of having supposed something to be beautiful which was not, makes one feel low or sinful, as it were. That is why controversy about art is liable to arouse acrimony: it can cut very near the bone of one's being.

Landscape paintings which even the near-expert is liable to hang upside down, figure sculptures like wave-worn rocks, and equally puzzling products of music and poetry, have been putting an unusual and growing strain upon public appreciation during the present century. Some modern artists are accused of deliberately cultivating an esoteric formalism, and in reply the modernists accuse the conservatives of stupidity. But modernists often dismiss criticism too readily as stupidity, and are themselves not free from a subjective and sectarian bias. There is a genuine contemporary problem in the inability of some of the most creative artists to appeal to a wider public—a problem analogous to the failure of our spiritual leaders to inspire modern man with the will to worship. There is a partial breakdown in communication which I must not here attempt to diagnose: the following reflections are concerned only with the improvement of such appreciation as there is, looking at the question from the side of the public, the appreciators and not the producers of art. Appreciation is as important as production.

Appreciation appears to be much the easier, and in a sense it is. The artist does all the work of discovery, invention and presentation and makes us a present of the result. Yet we have to perceive its value, which may or may not be easy for us, being what we are. In some cases we understand a work instantly, in others it may only dawn upon us after several experiences of it, perhaps even years afterwards. Or again, we may never be able to grasp it at all, in which case our best interest lies in accepting our insensibility with complete nonchalance. Giving it up as a bad job with perfect resignation is, in fact, occasionally rewarded. At

the next chance meeting with a work that was unintelligible it may suddenly beam upon one in its full beauty and meaning ; very much like a thing which one had been racking one's brain to remember without success until, having given up the effort and turned the attention elsewhere, it suddenly springs to mind of its own accord. The worst preparation for understanding a difficult work of art, as for recovering a submerged memory, is the strenuous effort to do so, for then you will be trying to catch it with the wrong net, looking for something other than what it really is. You have to *see* a work of art, not look at it ; *hear* and not listen to it ; let it look into you, or sound in you. Even then nothing within may respond ; this particular experience may not be for you : but if it is, the first requirement is to take yourself out of the way, to get out of your own light.

It is nevertheless true that you can improve your appreciation of art, and become capable of richer artistic experiences by means of study, study that is very much like work. Still more does the artist have to study and practise, often with labour and pains. Yet the artist knows that when he is about to produce anything of his best, the work begins to grow in his mind or under his hands in a manner beyond his calculation ; it is as though the work itself had not a logic, but an inherent *being* of its own, and the final realization is in some degree a surprise to the artist ; it may or may not have taken up and used some of the gains of his deliberate studies ; but it cannot be directly ascribed to them. Moreover, aesthetic capacity is developed by other things perhaps more than by critical or contemplative studies. Sometimes recovery from a bodily or psychic illness, or the survival of a vital crisis in the conduct of life, is followed by an intensification of artistic power or insight. But something of that may happen gradually, simply by having lived longer and experienced more. In any case it seems to come of itself, at its own good pleasure.

It is in this aspect that aesthetic and religious experience are not only analogous, but evidently in some way actually

related. Not a few religious thinkers and teachers have explored this relation, of which there is an abundant literature, but it needs constant re-interpretation as the place and nature of the arts change with the developments of civilization. For our generation there have been no better interpreters than Kierkegaard and the late Charles Williams, who also show us the ambiguity of the relation, the enmity and opposition between art and religion, the reasons why the religious often turn puritan and reject art, why artists often disregard religion and pursue art as the all-sufficient end of life. The faculty of art, by which man is most readily raised to the perception of higher things is also that which shows him to himself as the pseudo-creator, an image of self which he is most subtly tempted to idolize.

We have seen this most clearly in the last few centuries of Western culture. The number of people for whom a love of art functions in lieu of religion has been growing all that time and must now be very great. An age in which the artist has been supplanting the priest in cultural prestige has modified the conception and the ideal of personality until we have come almost to identify that ideal with productivity. Universal literacy, pictorial reproduction, higher education and travel have brought works of art of every kind within reach of practically everyone likely to value them, till it is no longer the virtues of saints but the creative powers of artists that are most widely and spontaneously revered, their biographies studied, and their places of birth, work or burial visited like shrines. When a comic writer of genius bequeaths his house to all posterity as a place of pilgrimage the public does not see this as his last and greatest joke, and he himself, alas, may have meant it seriously. The exaltation of art as the supreme value of life is absurd for a deeper reason than that the bulk of artistic production is only entertainment, or that much of it is misleading or corrupt; it would be nearly as absurd if all art were good art. No human faculty can live upon itself and for itself, nor can man exist by the cult of his own genius.

If he attempts to do so, man's essential humanity and dignity are insensibly devalued in favour of productivity, the standard of which declines from quality towards quantity. Dr. Brünner, in the lectures from which we have already quoted, connects the over-estimation of artistic genius, which reached its zenith about the time of Goethe, with that reliance upon competitive production in all the other spheres of human activity which was leading our civilization at the same time into the so-called epoch of "economic man". Give full license to creativity and invention, in disregard of all dependence and obedience, and it is not difficult to imagine the result—will there not be conflict, amounting to a threat of deadlock, between man and the natural world, between the societies of men, and within man himself?

That is the present condition of man, as it was outlined by Lord Russell in his recent broadcasts; and of course we are not to blame art or the artists for it—or not more than any other kind of work or worker. Over-valuation of artists and of productivity is an abnormality of culture that is not peculiar to any age or nation: but its excesses in contemporary civilization are symptoms of a division of labour so extreme that the various classes of men begin to develop into separate cultures. Men of science and art, of politics and manufacture lose hold on the underlying presuppositions of their common life: they begin to inhabit different worlds of discourse; and the utilitarian doctrine which seems to be common ground in effect divides them. But the artist's standards are non-utilitarian, supra-personal, whence his peculiarity and his power: something of the original spirit of unity clings about his vocation, and gives his greater normality an abnormal value.

Normally—that is, in a culture still sensible of religious and organic unities from which it has grown—art is not so separate and self-conscious, but rather a quality of the doing or making of whatever people need or want done. A thing very well done (and it is natural for the worker to

do his work as well as he can) is also, as we say, beautifully done ; but in such a culture beauty is not yet studied as if it were something extra that you could add to or take out of a work ; nor is the artist a man set apart. "The artist is not a special kind of man but every man is a special kind of artist"—that remark of the Indian philosopher Coomaraswamy, which the sculptor Eric Gill used to be so fond of quoting, is still a truth about men and artists. We speak of the "art" of medicine, even of salesmanship and other occupations, and quite correctly : there is element of art in them all, and in the conduct of social life as a whole.

Man's ability to make things—especially to make, in his imagination, "things more real than living man"—is the primordial proof of his unique nature ; of a being that transcends itself. *Homo faber* is a much truer label than *homo sapiens*. Between a primitive tribesman decorating his canoe-paddle and a sophisticated modern poet composing an ode there is less essential difference than we think ; both are, before and above all, making something additional to nature. And in earlier cultures, when all production was handicraft, the prosaic and the artistic motives in a piece of work were united and hardly thought of as distinct. People felt no such fundamental difference as we do between "technics" and "aesthetics", which to-day are studied in two different networks of schools taught by two different hierarchies of experts, headed in the one case by the pure scientists who venerate truth, and in the other by the hardly less abstract mystics of beauty. Each, with almost the passionate zeal of religious sects, claims the right to pursue its own aims and excellences in complete autonomy : and we have to concede that right. A society which has lost its sense of unity in the service of God, is nevertheless still dependent on the worship of his attributes—goodness, truth, beauty—even if in different departments of life.

The artist has become all too clearly "a special kind of man," and his works accordingly difficult. Yet the best works of art, like the truest insights of science (which are

still more esoteric) can still give men glimpses of pure reality, of normality; there are perfections that God still grants to the craftsman in the handiwork of whose craft is his prayer. These are communicated freely to all who have, or can attain to, the right simplicity of contemplation; riches conferred only on the poor in spirit. At the least they are symbols, at the best they can be anticipations, of the light of consciousness that shall be given to the children of God. Even in an epoch of disintegration and fear, these are experiences that speak to a soul here or there of a state of being in which every activity could be an art, its works prompted by the supreme Artist and offered to his glory. Have there been periods in the past when man's life was like that; or may it be so in the future; or perhaps only in a timeless world beyond our conception? In the moment when even its possibility is perceived the perceiver does not think to ask; his is the present in which all things are reconciled.

P. M.

## PROFESSOR JASPERS' PHILOSOPHICAL FAITH

PROFESSOR KARL JASPERS is one of the most influential contemporary teachers of philosophy on the Continent. He is a man who has consistently maintained an independent moral stand, both against the Nazis, and against prevailing nihilistic tendencies. Readers of the former *Christian News-Letter* may remember a translation of a noble address which he gave on the occasion of the re-opening of courses in the University of Heidelberg shortly after the war.<sup>1</sup> He has recently moved to a chair at

<sup>1</sup> *Christian News-Letter*, Supplement to No. 247, November 14th, 1945.

Basle. A translation of six lectures, all but one of which were given in the University of Basle in 1947 when he was still a visiting professor there, has now appeared under the English title *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*.<sup>1</sup> These lectures were originally published by R. Piper & Co. in Munich under the title *Der Philosophische Glaube*. The translator does not give the German title and publisher. This is surely a serious omission, since in a book of this kind, where interpretation is difficult, there may be readers who will want to consult the original. And if they do, they may wonder whether the change of title (presumably approved by Professor Jaspers) gives as adequate an indication of the nature of the book as did the German title. The new title suggests a *philosophia perennis*, or else an enumeration of the recurrent problems of philosophy, whereas Jaspers is really discussing the peculiar character of faith for philosophers. Moreover, in the translation the last lecture is headed "The Philosophy of the Future", suggesting a prophecy as to what this philosophy will be, whereas Jaspers' heading was *Die Philosophie in der Zukunft* and comprises a statement of what he thinks should be the attitude of mind of anyone who is going to try and do philosophy in our world as things are developing.

These criticisms are not given in order to carp at a translator who on the whole has made a valiant effort to give an English rendering of Jaspers' difficult, elusive and sometimes vague writing. But they are intended to warn the reader who may think that the book is intended to give him a firm body of ideas, rather than a description of Jaspers' personal faith about what he thinks is the character of serious philosophy.

This may be broadly described by saying that to Jaspers serious philosophy consists in an awareness of questions which arise at the boundaries of empirical scientific know-

<sup>1</sup> *The Perennial Scope of Philosophy*, by Karl Jaspers. Translated by Ralph Mannheim. Routledge, 10s. 6d.

ledge. The latter is knowledge of a "world" organized according to the categories of our thinking. It falls therefore within the subject-object relation; that is to say, we do not know reality as it is in itself but only as it appears to our minds. (This follows familiar Kantian lines). But beyond the phenomenal world is the "transcendent", i.e. reality as it is in itself, here called *das Umgreifende* (translated "the Comprehensive"), the real environment in and through which we exist. Jaspers has learnt from Kant that we cannot think of this real world under the categories used for organizing our phenomenal knowledge. To do so is characteristic of superstitions; of various kinds of fundamentalism; and of the *credo quia absurdum* theology which sets up some peculiar finite idea and tells us to conceive of the infinite in terms of it.

In his older works Professor Jaspers spoke of this "reality in itself" simply as *das Sein* or *Transcendenz*. Here he is prepared to call it *God*, and to put down "God is" as the first proposition of a philosophical faith. Yet this is surely misleading, if it is taken to be a general proposition to which any philosopher—even any philosopher using Jaspers' method and approach—should subscribe. For apart from some further leap of faith or considerations which are not here disclosed, it is not clear why what is here called "God" could not equally well be called "That which is what it is",  $\tau\circ\circ\circ\circ\circ$ , or *Ding an sich*, and some philosophers might in all seriousness say that it is less misleading to use these neutral terms. Possibly two things might be said here on Jaspers' behalf. One is that there is something awe-inspiring about coming to the limits of empirical knowledge. The "transcendent" acquires a capital T, a numinous quality; but does this mean that it thereby also acquires any of the other qualities people have generally meant when they have spoken of "God"? Secondly, Jaspers holds that we can take our own natures as a fair sample of what it means "to be"; and that our deepest knowledge of our own nature is found in our

experience of freedom, which seems both given us and something which we realize through its responsible exercise. And this (as Kant also said in his own way) gives us a kind of knowledge different from empirical knowledge of the phenomenal world.

Jaspers is therefore really describing in these lectures not a set of firm conclusions to which all philosophers should come, but an attitude of mind which he believes constitutes *responsible thinking* in philosophy. This he believes consists in recognizing that logic and empirical knowledge can never be a satisfactorily completed whole ; that such knowledge always points to some infinite which is not describable in the terms suited to empirical objects ; and that there is some surd of this kind in every serious philosophy. Besides this, Jaspers sets great store by the will to enter into communication with others, and by this he seems to mean not so much the power of entering sympathetically into other people's ways of thinking as the power to recognize another responsible thinker when you meet him. There must also be acceptance of obligation, and this is an obligation to think and act responsibly within the relativities of each historical situation. We have an absolute obligation, but we cannot make any idea, symbol, person, or rule of action itself into an absolute, since this would be to fixate the infinite in a form suitable only to the finite. Hence his sympathetic antipathy to religious beliefs, which he thinks are bound to make this fixation. Though this is very generally true, he perhaps underestimates the self-criticism and the struggle against idolatry which goes on within religion itself ; though he believes that he sees something of this self-criticism in "Biblical religion", since he thinks that almost every particular formulation in the Bible can be countered by a passage which challenges it. The side of "Biblical religion" which comes nearest to expressing his own combination of reverence before an unknown God with responsibility within a historical situation is of course that of the Hebrew prophets ; and

it is perhaps significant that he finds the "pivot" of our religious tradition and our history not in the New Testament but in "the period between 800 B.C. and 200 B.C."

Professor Jaspers holds a difficult central position between the purely individualist kinds of Existentialism and those kinds which can be expressed in terms of some form of Christian faith. He is deeply conscious of the spiritual revolution through which we are passing, and there is no mistaking the nobility of mind which informs these lectures. His method and idiom are a good deal removed from our British ways of philosophizing, particularly at the present time. (Here we may remark in passing, in defence of our British ways, that though the fashionable "linguistic analysis" may not be the whole of philosophy, it might not do the style of distinguished foreign philosophers any harm to be subjected to a dose of it).

May I add two further notes on the translation? On p. 109 we have the queer sentence "Philosophy can scarcely hold its position in this world if the human collectivity does not live in the people through religious faith". A line of the German (p. 85) has been missed, and the passage runs: "Philosophy can scarcely hold its position in the world if the human community does not live religiously. For the substance of philosophy lives in the people through religious faith". These sentences are part of Jaspers' argument that a philosopher needs a religious environment to which he must maintain a sympathetic detachment; is this, one wonders, the last word that can be said on a problem which admits of no general, and only individual solutions? Lastly, Jaspers' style abounds in specially created abstract nouns. German lends itself to this, but English does not, and such abstractions are often best rendered by a phrase. Instead, the translator constructs new abstract terms with abandon—sometimes producing hybrid barbarisms of Greek and Latin like "Demythicization" and "demonization", sometimes neologisms such as "deviltry" (not a misprint, since it recurs), and "exclusivity" (where we already have

“ exclusiveness ”). One which constantly recurs is “ the phenomenality of the world ”. Why not “ phenomenal character ”—or even Bradley’s good English word “ appearance ”? These comments are not given just out of literary purism: the multiplication of abstractions in existential literature and still more in translations of existential literature can serve to mystify rather than enlighten.

DOROTHY EMMET.

## REVIEW

*D. H. Lawrence and Human Existence* by Father William Tiverton.  
Foreword by T. S. Eliot. Rockliff, 12s. 6d.

In his Preface Father Tiverton apologizes for “ adding yet another to the multitudinous studies of Lawrence ”; he has been actuated by the wish to reconcile the Christian reader to Lawrence’s work because he believes, not only that Lawrence is a great writer, but that Christianity to-day has something to learn from him. Concerning *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* he writes :

“ In systematic terms, the difference between Lawrence’s view and that of the medievals, is that according to the latter the evil in sexual relations lies in the *ligamentum rationis*, the suspension of intellectual activity: whereas for Lawrence this is its supreme significance. In fact, both are right, or at least each is needed to complete the other. Lawrence would have agreed that sex as pure sub-rational animality must be condemned (he condemns it himself by comparing it with the acts of puppy-dogs); on the other hand, the divorce of mind from body and the over-intellectualizing of the physical destroys the very unity of man for which the best of the scholastic were in other ways contending. It remains true that Lawrence rightly suspected (with no knowledge of traditional Catholic theology) that something was wrong in the balance of Christian teaching, especially as so often expounded in his day. And we have to thank him for re-emphasizing an element in the doctrine of Creation which has too often been neglected.”

This is an interesting point of view but it requires a fuller exposition than Father Tiverton gives it. He is inclined to minimize the

gulf that separates Lawrence from the Christian and classical tradition. When Lawrence said "My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh as being wiser than the intellect" he really meant it, and it is not easy to reconcile that religion with the teaching either of St. Thomas Aquinas or of Hooker or of the Cambridge Platonists. One wishes that Father Tiverton had developed his argument more fully. If there is a fault to find with his book it is not that it is redundant (there is plenty of room for more studies of Lawrence) but that it is not sufficiently thorough.

Lawrence was a writer who broke new ground and one who wrote with great but unequal power; both the originality and the intensity of his vision make it difficult to appreciate his work justly. The reader may be repelled, or he may be swept off his feet. When we read the novels certain habits of expectation have to be broken down. Of this Lawrence himself was aware, he wrote to Edward Garnett about *The Rainbow*: "That which is physic—non-human, in humanity, is more interesting to me than the old-fashioned human element—which causes one to conceive a character in a certain moral scheme and make him consistent." His vision focuses on the sub-rational, animal nature of man in a way that makes it difficult for the reader to recognize the truth of what he is shown until he has learnt to see with Lawrence's eyes. Such obstacles to communication are common to all original artists in some degree. Unfortunately Lawrence's own sense that he saw differently from other people led him to theorize about the nature of man and of the universe. He looked for a religious faith that would accord with his vision of life; neither the faiths nor the unbelief of his contemporaries harmonized with what he saw and so he decided, as Blake had done, that he must "create a system or be enslaved by another man's." *The Fantasia of the Unconscious* is the most fully developed of Lawrence's "Prophetic Books". Its importance for the reader is confined to its flashes of poetic insight and to the light it throws on Lawrence's imaginative work. Lawrence tells us in the preface "This pseudo-philosophy of mine is deduced from the novels and poems, not the reverse. The novels and poems come unwatched out of one's pen. And then the absolute need one has for some sort of satisfactory mental attitude towards oneself and things in general makes one try to abstract some definite conclusions from one's experience as a writer and as a man. The novels and poems are pure, passionate experience." It is not as an abstract thinker but as an artist that Lawrence will live.

The first essential, then, is to separate the didactic Lawrence from the creative artist. Father Tiverton is aware of this need. In his penultimate chapter he writes : " we must insist again that he is to be judged, not as a priest, prophet, or even medicine man, but as a writer." The critic has to discern just where " pure, passionate experience " in the novels and stories is interrupted ; just where Lawrence looks away from the world he is discovering, towards the reader—the uncomprehending reader—and begins to hector him or to try to bludgeon him into acquiescence by the monotonous repetition of certain patterns of behaviour. This over-emphasis mars even some of Lawrence's best fictions. But because Father Tiverton is himself partly occupied with propaganda he does not always distinguish between Lawrence's art and his rhetoric. There is still room for a study of Lawrence's work in relation to the events and the intellectual background of his time ; such a study would explain why Lawrence was so often distracted from his artistic purpose, offering his reader conceptual thought of no great value instead of insight into the lives of men, women and children, such as he gives when he writes as an artist. Father Tiverton's book shows a perceptive appreciation of Lawrence's work, and one has no doubt that he is capable of critical discrimination, but he is distracted by his apologetic intention. His book is not long enough to achieve a dual purpose ; a much larger volume would be needed to examine both Lawrence's relation to Christian thought and the nature and limits of his success as a creative writer. Both objectives are worth while and there are signs that Father Tiverton might have achieved either, but each would require a substantial book. There is much to interest the reader in the book he has written and it has the important merit of sending one back to Lawrence's own work. It is the scope of Father Tiverton's design that makes one feel the book is too slight.

JOAN BENNETT.

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